

A Message from MTA Administrator Ralign Wells

The MTA has been a valuable transportation resource for nearly 40 years for communities throughout the state. Daily commuters and occasional riders alike expect, and deserve, reliable, safe and efficient public transit. This year's historic blizzard tested the MTA's standard winter transit service procedures and forced the agency to re-examine our operational processes during winter weather emergencies. I discovered that while we did many things well, there are other areas where we can do better, and we will!

First, let me focus on some of the many things that we did right.

MTA employees and contractors worked around the clock from the onset of the storm to keep vital transportation moving safely as all of us at the MTA know and understand the importance of transportation to the community, no matter what the weather. MTA along with City and state agencies, collaborated in an unprecedented manner to coordinate snow clean-up and sustain vital emergency and transportation services for as long as possible throughout much of the storm. In addition, MTA worked with city agencies to provide critical transportation for dialysis patients who needed life saving treatment during the extraordinary storm. I would be remiss if I didn't mention a little known fact that the MTA used its equipment to free dozens of snow plows, police vehicles, fire engines, and National Guard vehicles, as well as personal vehicles, while still maintaining transportation services.

In fact, during much of the storm, the only traffic moving in the city was MTA buses, trains and service vehicles. Remember, our employees don't live at MTA facilities, they had to make it in, and for much of the time stay in, away from their families and the comforts of their homes in order to meet Maryland citizen's transportation needs during the storm.

As I mentioned earlier, it's clear that there are areas where we could have done better. Our winter weather plans need to be revised and we need to place an increased emphasis on communicating with our customers to provide more timely accurate information and we will!

But remember, I am not sure that will ever be perfect because of the nature of transit services, and that during storms providing exact information is extremely challenging because services change constantly line by line service by service minute by minute due to any unforeseen condition. I should mention that recent customer complaints have helped us identify deficient areas such as the accuracy and timeliness of MTA website transit information, transit employee communications with customers, public address systems failures, informational signs and the lack of clear instructions at MTA facilities. We have identified some specific solutions to these problems.

- MTA is developing a Central Control Center, this will consolidate all modal control center functions enabling us to better communicate between the various modes of transportation, and allow for better public address announcements with accurate information.
- MTA is creating a quality control department to double check our work by using technology to monitor our performance on a real-time basis and take corrective actions immediately.
- MTA is building a communication center and installing additional PA systems to help improve communication to customers using our system, and we will be implementing technology which will allow us to provide real-time information about your bus or train, using Automatic Vehicle Locator Data to send the real-time information directly to your PDA or phone, taking the guess work out when your service will arrive.

As Administrator, I realize that when service doesn't operate as it should our customers are frustrated, as they should be. I am also a commuter and I am frustrated from a commuter perspective when it doesn't

operate as expected as well. My goal is to ensure that the MTA meets the demands of the citizens of Maryland and exceeds your expectations of our services.

We know that MTA is among the safest, most reliable means of transportation and we take our commitment to the public very seriously and are working hard to make things better. Customers should know that MTA managers regularly monitor how our buses and trains are performing and have always taken steps to investigate customer and community concerns about the ways that we should improve our service. The information we receive from the public is the most valuable tool we have when it comes to fixing transit problems, thank you for your feedback both the complimentary and not so complimentary.

Before I end, I must appeal to for your patience and understanding while we continue to recover from this unprecedented snow storm. You may still find some bus lines diverted, as some streets still aren't passable for our buses, and you might also find some delays on our rail services as high snow and ice has wreaked havoc on our sensitive rail equipment. I assure you that we are doing all that we can to reach our maximum service levels.

I will close promising you that we are taking additional steps to improve our quality controls; more aggressively investigating customer complaints and quickly addressing any service issues that we identify, and we are committed to further strengthening our dialogue with customers. Everyone at the MTA is committed to providing safe, affordable and efficient public transportation services. We understand that we need to continue to work hard so that each Marylander can comfortably make the choice to use transit services and that each citizen gets a maximum return on their tax dollar investment in our States transportations network.

I thank you for choosing MTA.